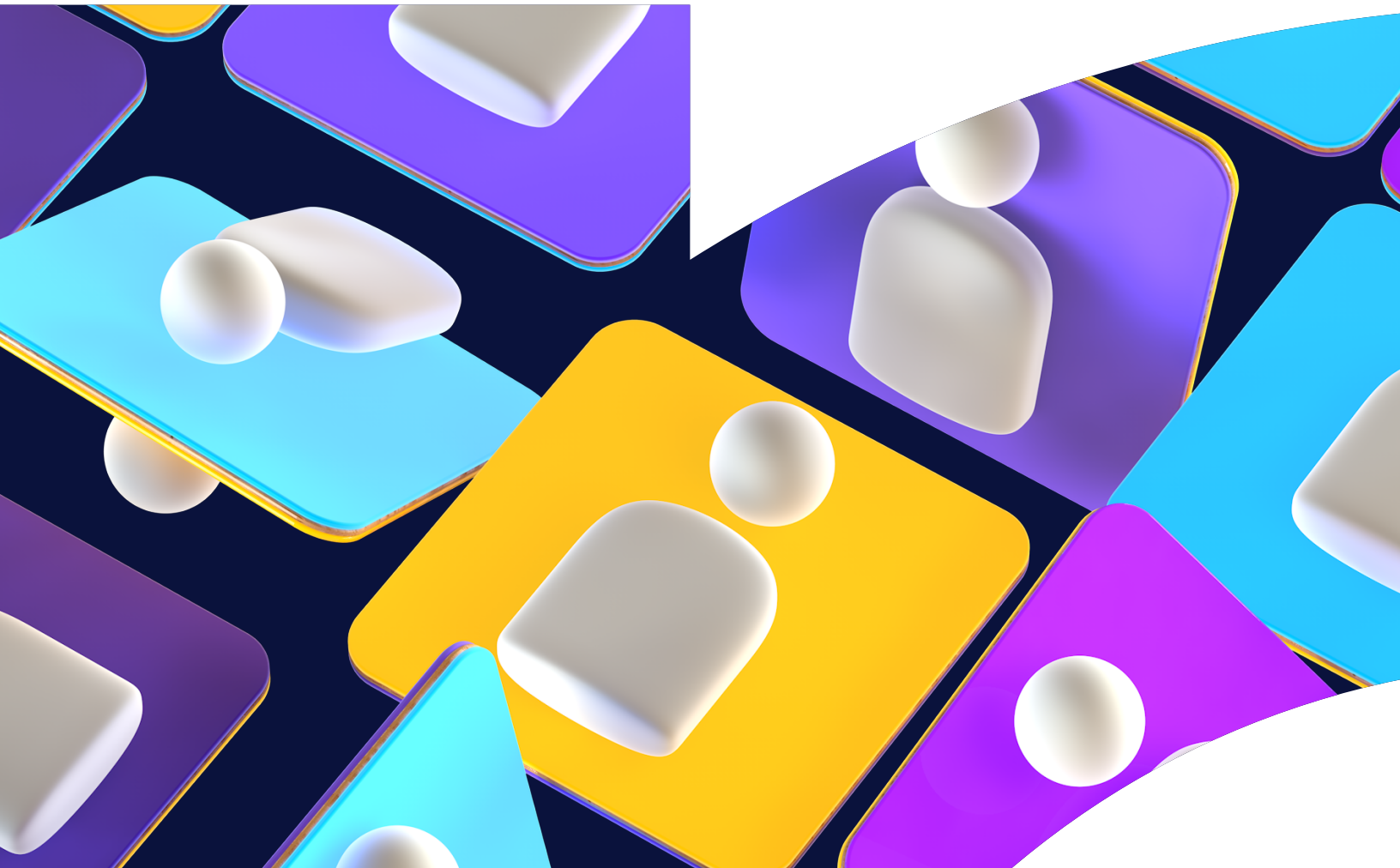# The Definitive Guide to E-Commerce Personalization

Strategizing and Scaling Winning Customer Journeys

bloomreach

Contents

A Re-Introduction to Personalization

A Re-Introduction to Personalization

Let's start with the tough part, which is that most of us are tired of personalization. We're tired of its demands, its unfulfilled promise, its shifting definition; we're tired of the very word.

Seeking clarity on the internet is almost always no help. One day an article tries to convince you that personalization is dead and the next day the top story is one that leaves you feeling defeated because your company isn't personalizing content like the world's best. And that's all next to paid ads, pop-ups, and emails screaming at you about reports, data, and customer opinions on the topic.

It can be overwhelming, to say the least, so let us help clarify.

The reality is that in the world of e-commerce, personalization is everything. It's what engages your customer, inspires them, and keeps them coming back. And getting it right so you can drive that ever-important brand loyalty doesn't have to be as complicated as it seems, so long as you get your order of operations down. Starting with defining your "personalization purpose" will help guide your e-commerce personalization journey, align your commerce-driving team, and ensure there's a light at the end of the proverbial tunnel.

What's our personalization purpose at Bloomreach? Simple. It's joy. Our goal is to help our customers bring elation to their customers through the [Bloomreach Commerce Experience Cloud](#).

As you read through this guide, keep joy in mind. It's easy to be distracted by the noise that surrounds personalization—both positive and negative. But if your company's goal is to spread joyous experiences to your customers and delight them through positive experiences with your brand, you've come to the right place.

The Definition of E-Commerce Personalization

When it comes to e-commerce, personalization is so much more than a Webster's Dictionary definition, or even the various definitions you'll find floating around the internet. In our world, personalization is quite literally the key that unlocks growth for your company and allows for easy optimization of the customer experience.

So, forget what you've heard and what you think you know about personalization in the e-commerce space thus far. Here's a definition you can lean on and trust going forward.

> **E-commerce personalization is the practice of using commerce data responsibly to get to know, guide, and impress your customers with experiences that are so relevant and contextual, they feel like magic.**
>
> **E-commerce personalization spans cross-channel, on-site, and in-app, resulting in measurable journeys that engage and lead customers through brand awareness to product discovery to repeat purchases.**

At Bloomreach, we pride ourselves on making personalization simple and actionable for marketers, merchandisers, CRM managers, and other key stakeholders. We do this with the Bloomreach Commerce Experience Cloud, which features Engagement, Discovery, and Content solutions that provide growth fuel for digital commerce.

We also aim to make personalization simple and actionable by sharing our perspectives, which will be outlined in this guide. The following pages will push you to think critically about the importance of personalized experiences. They will help you dig deeper into why personalization is so important in today's marketplace, why it's the concept your company needs to embrace to win, and, most importantly, how to achieve it.

"Know Me, Guide Me, Wow Me"

Let's dive a little deeper into the Bloomreach definition of e-commerce personalization, starting with our "know me, guide me, wow me" approach to escorting customers through the journey.

"Know Me"

Getting to know your customers is the most basic first step of e-commerce personalization.

In today's market, that means collecting commerce data (more on this term later) compliantly to develop this baseline understanding. Without data, you're just guessing. What data points actually help you get to know

customers? Website traffic, on-site interactions (page visits), interactions with email newsletters or other marketing emails, and many other key touchpoints that the customer has with your company.

Additionally, the "know me" concept must extend to all corners of your company. That means that the necessary data must not only be collected but shared across your entire technology stack for all key stakeholders to see and understand.

Multiple Touchpoints

Customers

ON-SITE INTERACTIONS

WEBSITE TRAFFIC

EMAIL

PAGE VISITS

SOCIAL MEDIA

ADS

"Guide Me"

Much like a tour guide, it's your company's job to use e-commerce personalization to guide customers to experiences with your brand that their data suggests they would enjoy.

If your collected customer data leads you to infer that a customer lives in a cold weather climate and has previously shopped for sweatshirts, use that data accordingly. It's obviously best to showcase sweatshirts, hats, mittens, and other cold weather apparel rather than sandals, sunglasses, and swimsuits in your product recommendations on your website.

We'll dive much more into personalization in relation to the customer journey later in this guide, but understand this key point—**the point of personalization is to build additional brand loyalty and help facilitate the customer journey. Your personalization efforts must have those two end goals in mind at all times.**

"Wow Me"

Imagine walking into your favorite brick-and-mortar clothing store and watching the shelves rearrange until all of your wishlist items prominently were displayed in your exact size and preferred color.

Obviously, we can't do this in a real-life physical space, but e-commerce personalization can achieve this in a digital one. And not only that, but if you know your customers and have guided them appropriately, that means you have the necessary background knowledge and can make predictions about other things they're likely going to be interested in — shoes, jewelry, belts, scarves, etc. all in your customer's preferred style and size. This is beyond "customers also bought", this is true personalization, and the possibilities are nearly limitless.

The deep background knowledge of your customers and products allows you to present an experience to them that is exactly what they are looking for, sometimes without them even realizing it.

The Importance of Commerce Data

Let's circle back to the concept of commerce data for a brief moment. While many of us aren't mathematicians or big fans of equations, the simple equation below will help you understand what we mean when we discuss commerce data and why it's so important to have in today's market.

Customer data is of course the personal, behavioral, and demographic data collected by your company on those who shop with you and visit your e-shop. Product data is the information about a product that can be read, measured, and structured into a usable format.

Customer Data + Product Data = Commerce Data

Having access to either customer or product data is essential depending on the nature of your e-commerce business. Having access to both—or commerce data, as we call it—is a key piece of the puzzle when it comes to using personalization to unlock commerce growth.

Why? Because the combination of commerce data and the right technology stack can help companies across the world answer those questions they have about increasing digital revenue and optimizing the customer experience.

Simply having product data isn't enough in today's market because you would be going in blind in your personalization attempts to individual customers. Basing personalization efforts off of inventory counts or sales numbers isn't the right kind of data-driven and is risky business.

Only having customer data still leaves the major gap of connecting customers to your business and products. Knowing a shopper's preference on t-shirt type or size is worthless if you can't connect that shopper to that specific type of t-shirt on the corresponding category page.

That's why commerce data is step number one in upgrading your e-commerce personalization efforts.

Personalization Paralysis:
Primary Challenges
(and Solutions)

Personalization Paralysis: Primary Challenges (and Solutions)

It was the headline heard around the world for many commerce-driven teams. You know exactly what we're talking about.

In late 2019, [Gartner predicted that by 2025, 80% of marketers would abandon personalization efforts](). Gasp.

Listing data as a major obstacle, Gartner detailed why a lack of ROI would lead to so many companies just abandoning their personalization pursuits completely:

"Marketers face other impediments to personalization success including the continuing decline in consumer trust, increased scrutiny by regulators and tracking barriers erected by tech companies. While personalization comprises 14% of the marketing budget, more than one in four marketing leaders cite technology as a major hurdle to personalization."

That's far from encouraging information as companies put money and resources into tech stacks and the teams that run them to optimize customer experiences. Gartner discusses three things specifically in this release: personal data, consumer trust, and technology.

Let's be clear—Gartner is definitely not wrong in stating that personal data, consumer trust, and technology are major impediments to success with personalization. Where we will challenge the process is that while these things can stand in your way, they are solvable problems and the rewards far outweigh the risks.

Data Collection

Personalization starts with data collection, which hasn't historically been an issue. But these days, compliantly collecting data has gotten significantly more challenging. This is in large part due to new governing laws and regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and others. These governing principles present extra hurdles for commerce-driving teams to jump over and can enforce steep penalties for non-compliance.

Another reason collecting data has gotten more challenging is because of internet browsers making significant changes to third-party cookies and third-party tracking. This has required companies to begin thinking about [personalization in a post-cookie world](#) and to start asking and [answering difficult questions](#) about how to better own their customer relationships and data.

But there are most certainly ways to [win in a cookieless world](#) and many of our [Bloomreach customers have already been successful in doing so](#). Personalization efforts don't have to stop because of governing laws/regulations or because of third-party tracking changes—they just have to change.

One way your company can change with data collection efforts? Zero-party data.

Zero-party data is data that a customer intentionally and proactively shares with a brand. It can include preference center data, purchase intentions, personal contexts, and how an individual wants to be recognized by the brand. [Forrester Research](#) was the first to introduce this term and collecting zero-party data has since become increasingly important to companies across the globe.

Companies can collect zero-party data in a myriad of ways including creating user-friendly micro experiences, creating NPS surveys, or asking for information during opt-in.

Or, in the case of Bloomreach customer [baby-walz](#), you prove to your loyal customers that you can provide value to them when they give their zero-party data.

The German-based company that sells predominantly children's products asked expecting mothers who were opted in for the newsletter for the estimated date of birth for their child. This information allowed baby-walz to better understand the needs of the mother—and eventually the child—with a specifically tailored customer journey that would be relevant to each specific step of the pregnancy and thereafter.

[The result was an email open rate that was 54% higher than normal](#) and some very satisfied expecting mothers.

Consumer Trust Issues

While the aforementioned laws and regulations have gone a long way to protect consumers, they have also made them much more aware of what is happening with their personal data. That has led to the consumer trust issues that Gartner referenced in its release.

Staying in compliance with governing laws and regulations will go a long way in helping to ease the minds of your committed customers. After all, it's tough to keep them around if your company has a data breach or some similarly catastrophic data event.

But it isn't just as simple as caring for collected data so there isn't a breach. Companies should have a "data minimization" mindset whenever possible to stay compliant with GDPR or other such laws. Data minimization is a principle that encourages companies that collect and process data not to hold or use that data any longer than it has to be used. That basically means that if you no longer need data on a customer for whatever reason, that data should not be kept "just because".

If concerned customers know a company follows this data minimization mindset, they will be more likely to give zero-party data, consent to cookies while browsing a website, or just trust the company in general.

Technology

Imagine having compliantly collected data, built consumer trust, and still be missing the right technology stack to adequately personalize the customer experience for your consumers.

That would be frustrating.

Gartner hints at those frustrations when it mentions technology in its release. You can have all of the data you need, the right elements of trust, but none of it matters if you don't have the technology stack to deliver results. Common problems in this arena include a bunch of point solutions cobbled together by an IT team, and dealing with the resulting disparate data streams, or the complete opposite: a legacy cloud with no flexibility and an incredibly long implementation timeline.

That's why we at Bloomreach built out the Commerce Experience Cloud the way we did. Our Discovery tool offers AI-driven search and merchandising while Content offers a headless CMS and Engagement provides a top CDP and marketing automation solution.

Together, these platforms form a cloud that serves the most foundational components of the commerce experience in one location, backed by the commerce data professionals need for truly exceptional execution. It's flexible, gets up and running quickly, and starts kicking out results right away.

Using Personalization to Unlock Commerce Growth
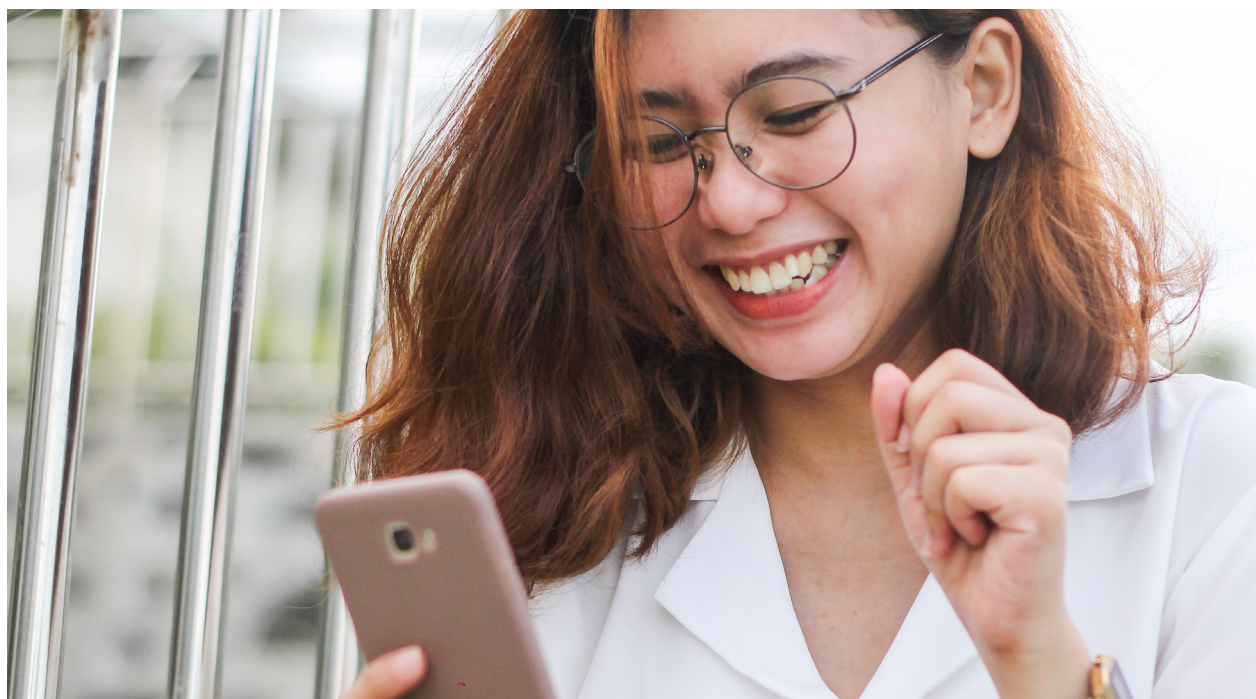
Using Personalization to Unlock Commerce Growth

Now that we've been through all the bad, let's talk about joy.

Being truly customer-centric means focusing on providing joy, which results in customer loyalty. And customers who are loyal to your brand are going to showcase that loyalty by repeatedly purchasing products, increasing lifetime value. They're going to engage with your personalized email campaigns, add your personalized product recommendations to their cart, and participate in your loyalty program.

Customer joy relates directly back to your commerce-driving team's KPIs. Joy will bring these customers to your site, get them shopping for products across categories, and keep them engaged for future purchases.

Maya Angelou's famous quote states that "people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made

them feel". That feeling of joy construed with your brand's personalized experiences is not one that will be forgotten.

If your company just isn't there yet with e-commerce personalization? Don't worry, you've come to the right place. Everybody starts somewhere. Not everybody is going to be Netflix or Spotify overnight.

Start with Customer Centricity

A lot of companies and departments within those companies claim to be customer centric, but are they really? Customer centricity requires being aligned on goals and KPIs, but how can you be aligned if you're incentivized by channel?

Being a channel-centric company compared to a customer-centric one makes all the difference when it comes to personalization. The diagram below gives the visual representation of the difference between the two models.

Old Model vs. New Model

Channel-Centric Approach | Customer-Centric Approach
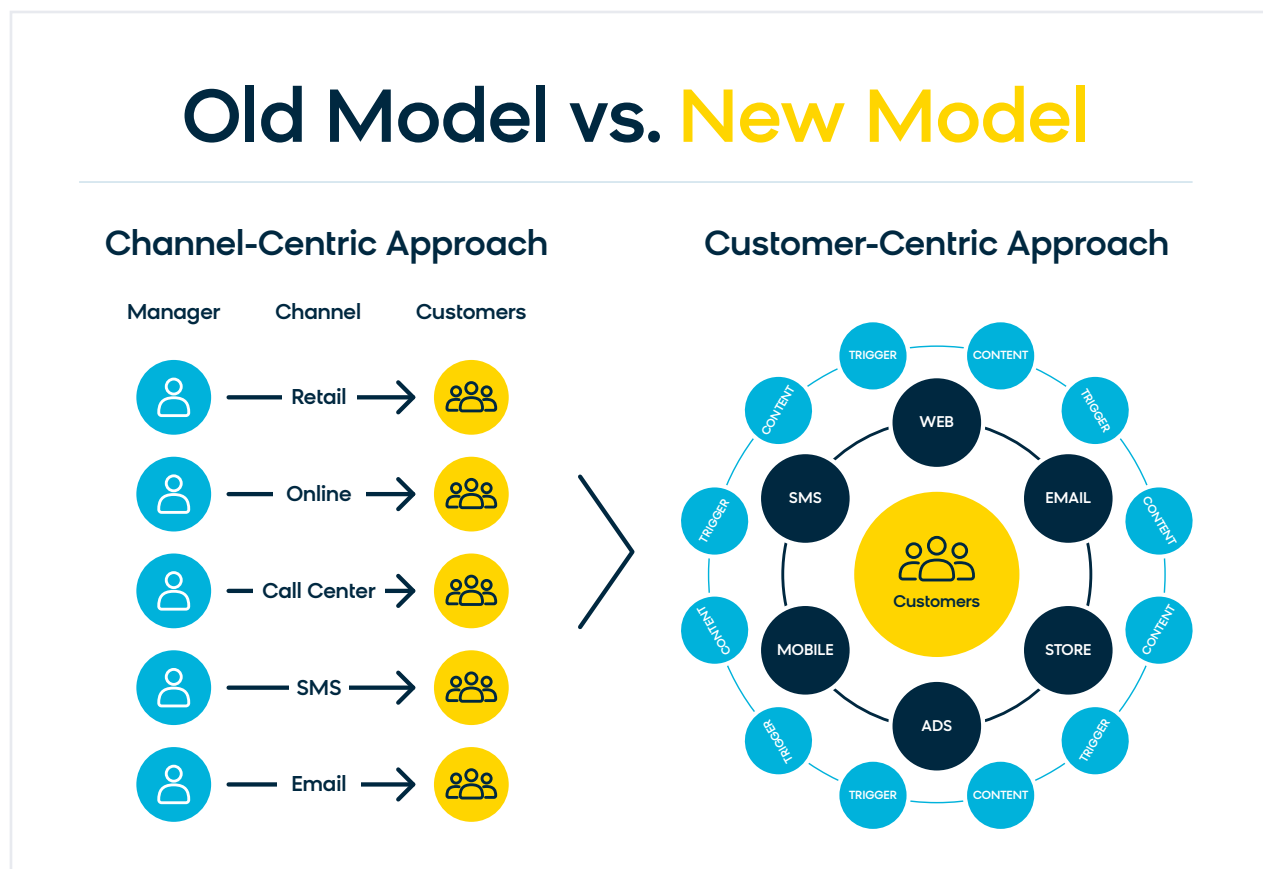
A channel-centric approach creates data silos and a fragmented picture of the customer. One team doesn't know what the other one is up to, and the customer ends up with a disjointed, inadequate experience. This is a major challenge facing companies in today's digital commerce marketplace.

If you want to avoid this, you need to become customer centric. A CDP, or a [CDP plus marketing automation solution like Bloomreach Engagement](#), makes this transition much easier by breaking down silos and giving everyone access to a complete picture of your customer thanks to its ability to create a single customer view.

If you can put this important staple into the DNA of your company, you'll be better equipped to win with personalization. Although this change takes time, it's an important cause worth investing in.

Think Beyond the Easy Win

Whether you're playing your favorite sport or personalizing experiences to bring joy to your customers, you always want to get started with some easy wins early on. It builds confidence and makes your commerce-driving team believe in itself and its ability to serve customers at a high level.

However, those easy early wins are not always fully representative of the bigger or broader picture. It's easy to begin your personalization journey and get very excited about increased email open rates or landing page conversion rates—and we're not saying you shouldn't—but don't lose sight of the fact that personalization is so much bigger than just a couple of metrics.

Good commerce-driving teams don't let these early wins silo their personalization efforts. It's easy to see these victories and invest more in those channels while not realizing that you are actually creating a more inconsistent customer experience across the board.

The goal of e-commerce personalization is to create a connected commerce experience that drives brand loyalty and increases customer lifetime value. Personalizing channels in silos—often a byproduct of a disconnection between the marketers, merchandisers, and CRM managers on teams— leads to an inconsistent experience being created for customers. It eliminates the hope for a seamless customer journey and focuses on channel-centric experiences rather than customer-centric experiences.

The Short and the Long of it

There will be short-term victories with e-commerce personalization. And those are worth celebrating so long as they don't disrupt your long-term strategy.

But winning with e-commerce personalization is truly a long-term process. Consider our Personalization ROI Flywheel.

Connect Data

Generate New Insights

Personalization ROI Flywheel

Scale to All
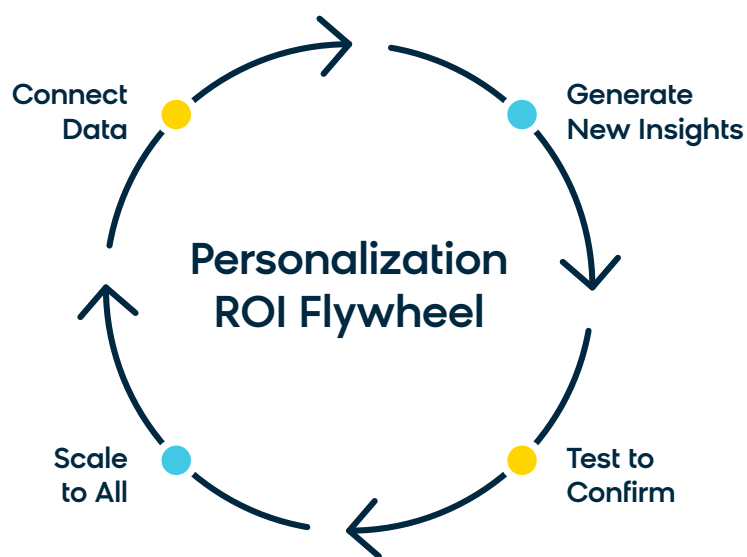
Test to Confirm

The Personalization ROI Flywheel shows us exactly how the personalization process should take place—connect data to generate insights for your use case, test to confirm, and scale to all. But it's also important to remember that you should be doing this for every use case, so you should be constantly coming back to the Flywheel to re-spin it.

It's a simple, scalable process that should never be abandoned as your company looks to dive deeper with personalization and chase after more successful use cases.

Stages of Personalization

Now that we've covered the foundational stuff, let's get into the different stages of personalization. Knowing them is key because chances are you're in one of these buckets, and it's time to move on to the next.

After all, personalization done right is a ceaseless process for both you and the customer. As your customers progress through their journey, you'll obtain more commerce data on them and learn more about who they are, enabling you to deliver even better experiences that keep them coming back again and again.

Static-Based Campaigns: One To All

With static-based campaigns, there are no variations in the content being dispersed to your customers. Content is created at the macro level and is distributed to a company's entire customer base regardless of any individual customer history or data collected.

The content creation process with static-based campaigns can be exhausting because you're trying to keep in mind different characteristics of audience members and incorporate things for them in the content while understanding that everyone is going to receive the same message. The ROI on campaigns like this is also traditionally low as the content is only delivered on one channel.

By today's lofty personalization standards, this almost isn't even personalization at all. It's creating content or campaigns in the hopes of connecting with the masses rather than using commerce data and your technology stack to connect with individuals on a more personal level.

Rules-Based Campaigns: One To Many

With rules-based campaigns, customers are having experiences with your brand across different channels—site, mobile, email, social media, etc.—but these experiences are largely inconsistent and disjointed.

In this stage, campaign rules determine the next interaction with customers. Generally speaking, these campaigns are a result of disconnected teams and tech stacks that are more focused on individual KPIs than the ultimate goal of connecting the customer experience.

While the rules help to personalize content, so much more can be done to create the best possible experience for customers in today's market.

Model-Based Campaigns: One To Some

With model-based campaigns, you're starting to get into the more modern personalization examples that companies strive for.

Each channel has a variety of content based on the channel itself, the messaging, and personas. Some channels are able to integrate messaging—such as SMS, MMS, or WhatsApp—to more directly communicate with consumers.

Companies at this stage are able to run audience-based segmentation campaigns but there is still minimal integration between channels and still a general feeling of disconnection between the channels and team members.

Integrated Interactions: One To Few

In this stage, customers finally begin to experience a connection between the online and offline messaging of your brand.

Companies in this stage are able to communicate with customers on an interactive basis by leveraging model optimization and response messaging. There's automated segmentation for campaigns, meaning that consumers at different stages of the customer journeys can receive messages more tailored to previous experiences with the brand.

Many companies that are committed to e-commerce personalization efforts find themselves here—and that's great! Using personalization to guide customers through their journey with your company is a worthwhile investment. But the final stage is what happens when companies dare to dream a little bit bigger with personalization.

Interaction Orchestration: One To One

In this final and most optimal stage, customers experience personalized content across all channels that they interact with a company on.

Communications are defined by interest and interactions and are delivered at the optimal time for the customer. This information is learned via collected commerce data.

Being able to personalize at this level truly makes customers feel like they are the only shopper your brand cares about because of how the entire experience is tailored specifically to them. For the modern commerce team, this is the ultimate goal.

Getting Started in 7 Steps

Getting Started in 7 Steps

While there are dozens of different maturity models on the market that try to explain the different levels of personalization and how to climb the ladder to success, we at Bloomreach believe that the best way to measure personalization success is by visualizing it like a puzzle.

Every piece of your personalization puzzle is important. While you can look at it as something composed of individual pieces, the thing that's ultimately important is the final connected picture. Meaning even if you have all the right pieces, but you arrange them into an image that doesn't make sense, you will see little to no results.

What is the image that makes sense for your company? It's likely a combination of micro-level victories (increases in key metrics such as open rate, conversion rate, etc.) and macro-level victories.

For example, if an e-commerce fashion company offers a more personalized experience to help customers find the right fit for clothing items, this can

have a huge impact on the company's big picture. Most specifically, it can lower the number of items returned. And while this can potentially scare off customers from buying something they now know doesn't fit, it can lead to higher profits in the end as customers are now making far less returns of items that don't.

Each puzzle piece of your company's personalization puzzle provides an example of how you have used commerce data to improve the customer experience. When you do this, it leads to e-commerce success. Success is inevitable because you have made the customer experience better.

When our CEO here at Bloomreach, Raj De Datta, founded the company in 2009, it was with the belief that customers wanted and deserved incredible online experiences, and that personalization was the key to achieving them. Brands that have put personalization at the heart of their digital experience are not only seeing positive business results, they're also delivering the type of experience customers have long been seeking—the type of experience that builds true brand loyalty.

> "For years, digital commerce was simply about standing up a store," De Datta explains. "Today, it's about standing out. Personalization at scale allows a business to unlock the next level of e-commerce growth by offering a digital experience that feels catered to each consumer.
>
> In tapping into the unified power of customer and product data, brands now have the ability to engage, inspire, and convert consumers in a truly memorable way.
>
> And it's that kind of experience that convinces the consumer to engage with a brand again and again."

If your company is new to personalization and this is sounding a little overwhelming, don't worry. The hardest part of adopting any new e-commerce strategy is the initial planning and figuring out how to adapt the strategy perfectly to your brand.

Personalization is no different. It takes a commitment from the whole company to do it the right way. These seven steps will help serve as a roadmap as you begin your personalization pursuits.

Step 1

Identify. Specifically, identify where and how you want to personalize your website or your marketing communications for visitors.

This decision should of course be made with the customer in mind. Where can you create personalized experiences for customers that bring them joy and encourage them to stay loyal to your brand?

Step 2

Research. Gather all of the information you could possibly need about e-commerce personalization technologies, what they specifically do, and how they fit into your company goals and previously identified plan.

[Full-site personalization](#) and [personalized automated marketing campaigns](#) are not only possible in today's market, they are almost expected by the modern customer. Choose a vendor that is committed to facilitating personalization at scale and has a proven track record of providing value to e-commerce customers.

Step 3

Assign. As in, ensure that your company is able to assign enough resources to the project at hand. And don't just think of resources in terms of finances

or money. Deciding who's to oversee the project, how gains will be measured, and many other important choices are extremely important. If your commerce-driving team is as diverse as many are, ensure that you have representatives from marketing, merchandising, and CRM roles to give input.

Step 4

Define. Personalization efforts require a long-term vision and optimization process. Define that vision and process here with your commerce-driving team.

Specifically, consider what your long-term goals with personalization are. Perhaps find a company in a different vertical that's excelling in personalization that you can emulate or follow in the steps of.

Step 5

Start. Since your research is done and your vision and goals are in place, it's time to begin the actual work.

Start to segment and personalize your site and marketing communications. Take careful note of which areas of your site benefit the most from personalization and which key metrics improve with your marketing campaigns.

Step 6

Continue. Keep going! If you're getting the results that you hoped for, continue doing what you are doing.

If you're not, re-assess and optimize the process where it is needed. Not being afraid of small changes to the original strategy can be very beneficial if those changes are data-driven and you believe they can help improve

your metrics. Continue monitoring, tweaking, and recording the data until you have something that you are fully happy with.

Step 7

Scale. Now it's time to do it big. You've made all of the necessary adjustments and you should have 100% confidence in your personalization strategy and the ability to recreate your positive results at scale.
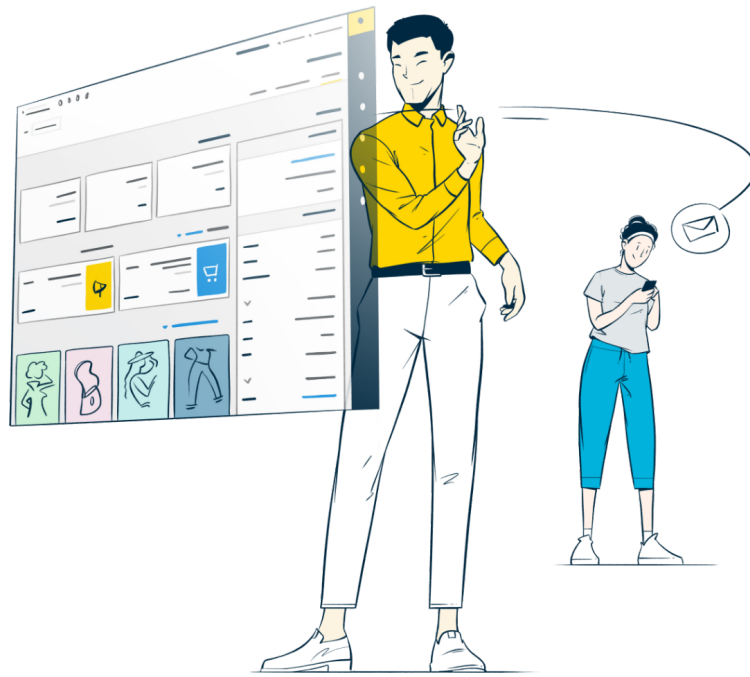
Scale your personalization efforts across all of your existing channels—maybe even add a few. Ensure your commerce-driving team stays as connected as possible as scaling can be taxing on everyone.

Personalization MVPs: The Modern Digital Commerce Team

Personalization MVPs: The Modern Digital Commerce Team

Modern commerce-driving teams feature marketers, merchandisers, and CRM managers to recruit visitors, turn them into paying customers, and keep them loyal to brands. The monumental shift to digital seen during the global pandemic has made these roles much more complicated, but keeping them aligned as much as possible is key to success.

One theme all three of these roles are united behind? Surprise, surprise, it's personalization. But success is bigger than each role just using personalized experiences to achieve their own individual goals. Each role must work together in today's market to ensure that the experience you're offering isn't disjointed and the customer can flow naturally through the journey.

If a marketer sends a personalized email campaign that details a 20% off sale on a watch and a customer clicks on it, the merchandiser's landing

page needs to support that marketer's email. If the landing page begins discussing the newest line of sweaters or t-shirts instead, the customer's experience is already disjointed after just one or two clicks.

Or, if a merchandiser does personalize the landing page coming from the email and a purchase happens, the CRM manager needs to be privy to that data. If the CRM manager is not aware because of a disconnected tech stack and fails to send follow-up information to the buyer about how to best maintain the watch or how to join the customer loyalty program, what could have become a lifetime customer stays as a one-time purchaser.

The reason that so many modern companies fail with e-commerce personalization is that there's not enough synergy between marketers, merchandisers, and CRM managers. These employees are so focused on their individual channels and goals that they miss the big picture of offering a connected customer experience that allows customers to flow seamlessly through the journey and build brand loyalty.

Connecting the Dots

So how do you connect the experience? A unified e-commerce personalization effort by those on your commerce-driving team. A customer-centric approach rather than a channel-centric strategy. And maybe most importantly, open lines of communication amongst team members and a willingness to buy into overarching team KPIs even if it means sacrificing individual ones.

A marketer's job is to get customers in the queue so merchandisers can make sales and CRM managers can nurture to maintain engagement. Personalized experiences and personalized marketing communications are the best tools to introduce new customers to your brand and keep existing customers engaged.

Merchandisers are responsible for getting the product "off the shelves" so to speak. The importance of relevant search results cannot be overstated and personalizing search to best fit the needs of customers essentially means that relevant search results will be returned at a higher rate and those search results can eventually help generate revenue.

The name of the game for CRM managers is reactivation, retention, and increasing the frequency of purchases. Figuring out a customer's optimal send time or optimal channel are outstanding personalization strategies for these members of the team. Having a great customer loyalty program in place is also extremely important.

Can all of these different aspects and roles really be tied together? Absolutely. Some of our Bloomreach customers have already done so.

My Jewellery Wins With Zero-Party Data

Consider My Jewellery, a clothing jewelry retailer based in The Netherlands, and what it did to take personalizing the customer experience to the next level. It used zero-party data to personalize product recommendations to offer the most relevant products to loyal customers.

In 2020, My Jewellery created the style profile test, a quiz that helps shoppers identify which pieces fit their own personal style, to gather zero-party data from interested visitors and repeat customers.

What's your style?

Golden Leaf Ring
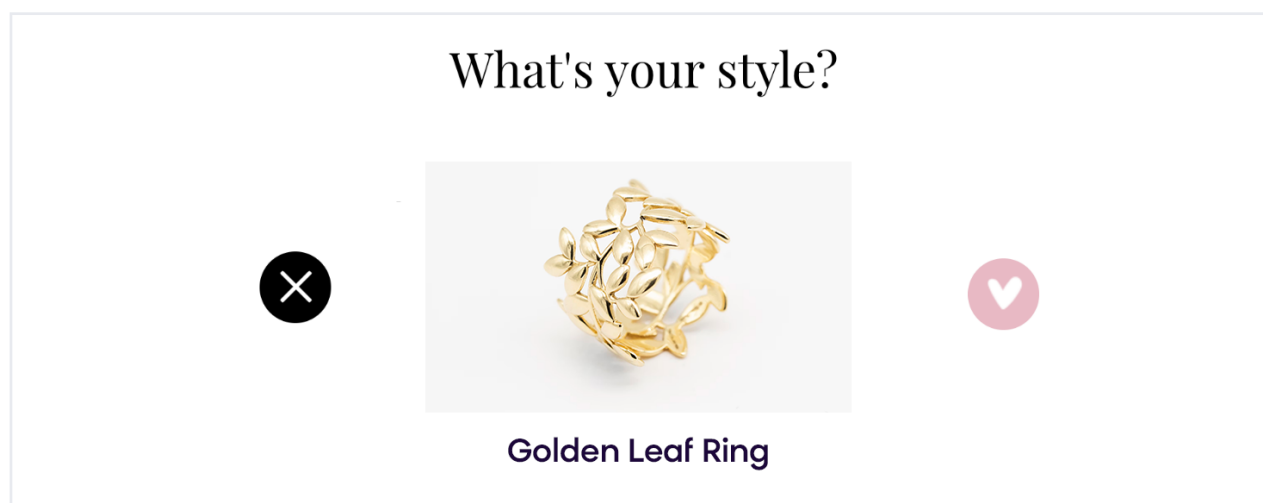
The quiz was a hit with customers and the zero-party data collection method helped to develop a style profile that would assist with relevant product recommendations that optimized the customer experience. Plus, loyal My Jewellery shoppers loved the creative quiz concept and seeing many of their favorite pieces successively.

What's your style?

Cool

Basic

Classy

Feminine

Classy is your style

You will shortly receive an email with your full style profile and personal style advice

Have a look at the following categories & find out if the classy style suits you.

Classy jewelry   Classy clothing   Classy accessories

The data collected helped My Jewellery to know what style of pieces the shopper preferred and it could easily recommend products that fit this style in future personalized marketing communications.

That data also helped inform future personalized communication efforts from marketers, future product recommendations for merchandisers, and clued-in CRM managers about likes and dislikes of style that can help shape future customer retention campaigns. A total team win.

The immediate victory was a 20% or so increase in email open rate but the zero-party data gathered could be used for a multitude of other important tasks.

Mall.CZ's Personalized Video Campaign Amazes Customers

A leading general e-shop in the Czech Republic, Mall.CZ launched a video campaign that sent 20,000 personalized videos to a specifically targeted segment of customers with the help of Bloomreach.

Centered around Mall.TV's series "Life is a Game", the Motionlab video campaign was enormously successful because of the incredible amount of details that were personalized to the specific customer. The video boosted brand awareness and sales as users who were targeted by the video bought 701% more worth of products in the Mall.CZ shopping gallery compared to others who saw the same offer in a different (non-personalized) manner.

Personalized aspects of the video included the name of the customer, the customer's address, and a specific video feature that was personalized based on the customer's gender. It also included a personalized product recommendation that was best suited for the customer receiving the video based on commerce data collected by Mall.CZ.

Just like My Jewellery, this is a dream campaign for the modern commerce-driving team. It featured an innovative personalized marketing communication that converted at a high rate, a personalized product recommendation for one of a key group of products, and left customers who received it with an increased loyalty towards the brand because of the high quality of the personalized production.

Sofology Personalizes Experiences With Online and Offline Commerce Data

Sofology, one of the largest omnichannel furniture retailers in the United Kingdom, uses Bloomreach connect offline and online commerce data to personalize and optimize the digital experience. Being able to connect data collected from in-store visits and even data collected from call center interactions helped to more personalize the customer experience for interested visitors and repeat customers.

But the furniture purchasing cycle and experience is far different than many other digital commerce stores. It is often a much more lengthy sales cycle and there are more interactions with the brand before a purchase actually happens. Some customers also like to be able to sit on the furniture they order prior to making the purchase—hence the importance of the connection of online and offline commerce data.

The longer sales cycle and additional brand interactions increase the importance of presenting relevant content to customers that is personalized to where they are at in the customer journey. Communicating in a personalized manner with customers with the right language (based on previously collected commerce data) and the right calls to action is of the utmost importance.

Does the data point to the customers wanting to try out the furniture again? Invite them back to the closest location to them. Or maybe a video call is more appropriate. Or even just a CTA for an online purchase that you would see in a different vertical might be the best fit.

The collected commerce data informs Sofology which way to move forward with each customer to best personalize the experience and help push said customer towards a sale. Every customer is different and without this online and offline commerce data, Sofology would be missing a large piece of the puzzle when it comes to personalizing customer experiences and facilitating sales.

B2B Personalization

B2B Personalization

It's important to remember personalization efforts for B2B commerce are quite different from what is seen in B2C commerce.

This is largely because of one main reason: B2B buyers make a purchase with a specific problem to solve in mind, but that problem is not personal to them. The purchase being made reflects a need to solve a problem for customers that are companies and that problem may not be the same issue that company was facing the last time it browsed on to buy.

The issue of not always knowing the customer intent makes B2B personalization extremely challenging. [Hence the need for "contextualization" of your B2B site](#) to supplement your personalization efforts.

Contextualization literally means to put an element in context for the purpose of study. So in the case of personalizing your B2B e-commerce site, today's leading B2B e-commerce sites must account for this additional context of application just as effectively as they do for the contexts of product and customer.

The importance of machine learning and AI with contextualization cannot be overstated. If the goal is to differentiate a B2B commerce experience from the competition, machine learning and AI are the tools needed to grant the ability to observe and learn from consumer behavior online. And in turn, personalize content based on that context.

Consider this real-world example—a commercial electrical contractor is bidding on a renovation project for a large multi-unit hotel in the downtown area this week. But next week, this individual has a different order for a job to expand a local car wash to add extra bays. Both orders may call for switches, but the kinds of switches the buyer may search for while building the hotel proposal are likely to be quite different from the searches done for the car wash project.

This is why contextualization is so important. Sweaters are almost always going to be sweaters in B2C commerce. But switches can have multiple relevant meanings in B2B commerce. And your personalization efforts need to reflect that context.

It can take time to build up enough data for the results to be meaningful, but some platforms have an advantage in that they already have large data sets of transactional data that have trained their algorithms. It's therefore faster to deliver meaningful results in a "contextualized experience" that works even in the kinds of complex technical applications found in B2B.

With these capabilities now available, we are entering a fresh era for B2B e-commerce where the clumsy, often inaccurate merchandising that characterized the earlier days of e-commerce is quickly replaced by new approaches. Successful companies are moving quickly to use technology like Bloomreach to create commerce experiences that account for all three contexts—product, customer, and application. They use contextualization to build experiences that are more helpful and more trusted by buyers while also being differentiated and more profitable for the sellers.

Personalization

Contextualization

Customer

Product

Application

Customer

Product
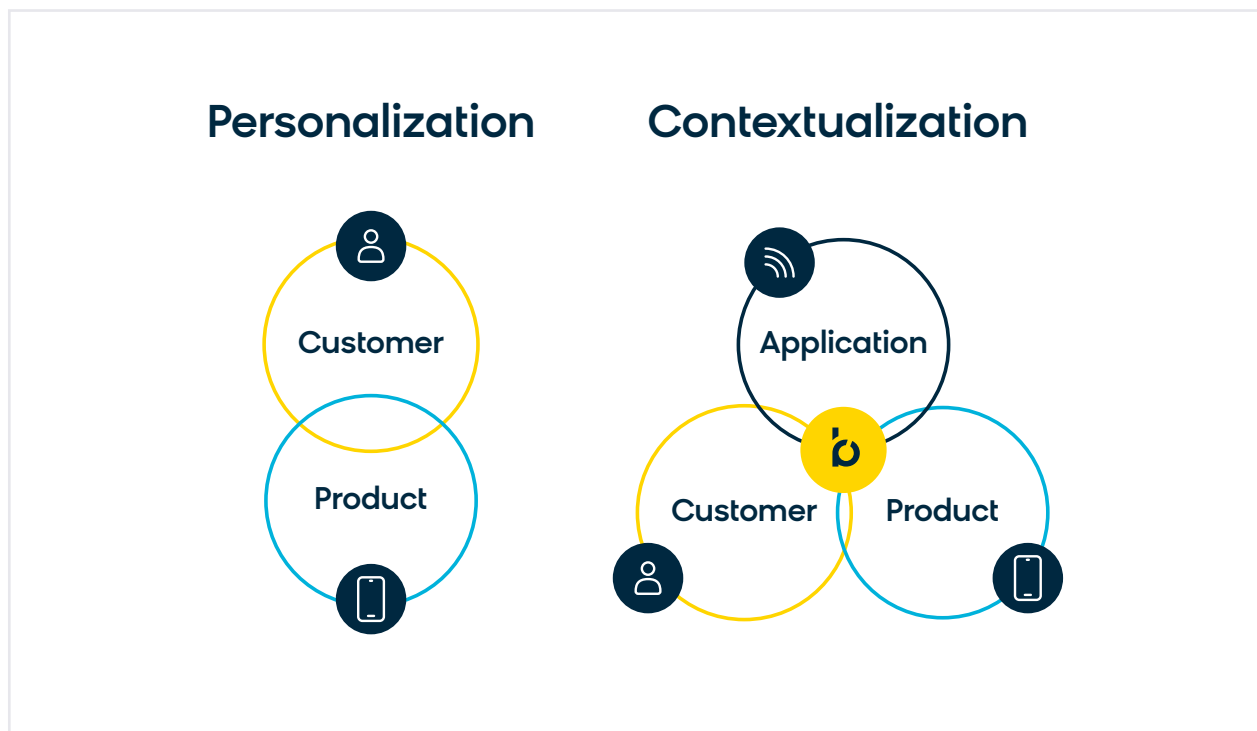
Thinking Past "The Person" of Personalization

Thinking Past "The Person" of Personalization

The aforementioned contextualization of B2B commerce can also be applied in a B2C setting.

The focus of personalization does not always have to be one person's preferences. Personal preferences most certainly exist—but they can be outweighed by in-context motivations.

That means that oftentimes companies must think past "the person" of personalization and personalize content based on the scenario and the clues being offered in the context of the current situation.

Consider a good B2C example here: Sheena is a road cyclist who routinely participates in road races with her friends and takes cycling very seriously. She often purchases cycling supplies from her favorite e-commerce shop and has purchased bicycle tires from this shop three times in the past eight months. These tires are the top brand for road racing and the search and purchase data related to these purchases fits the rest of her customer profile perfectly.

However, this upcoming weekend, Sheena's in-laws are coming into town and they want to go mountain biking. Uh oh. Sheena needs tires for her bike that will support a different type of ride ASAP.

This is the perfect example of the context totally switching for a customer in a B2C setting. Sheena may never again need mountain biking tires, but this weekend, she needs them. And your B2C business needs its personalization engine to recognize that Sheena is not her typical self in searching for a different type of tire and return search results accordingly to facilitate this sale.

While that's one way of thinking past "the person" of personalization, Netflix has developed an innovative approach of its own to do this.

Netflix, one of the world's best at personalizing content for users, has introduced profiles for individual users within an account. If you're sharing your account with those in your household, you can have up to five profiles that will maintain personalized viewing preferences for each user.

That means that you don't have to tolerate show recommendations that don't fit your watching profile. For example, if your significant other loves home improvement shows and you don't enjoy them, those shows won't be recommended to you on your profile. Netflix will only recommend shows to you that it thinks you will like based on what you have searched for or already watched.

Imagine for a second that Netflix didn't have those multiple profiles and you and your significant other were sharing the same one. The personalization engine would be nearly useless because roughly half of the recommendations would be for you and the other half or so would be for your significant other. Partially personalized content isn't good enough in today's market.

Investing in the Right Technology

Investing in the Right Technology

In fact, partial personalization is really just another way to describe a disjointed customer experience. If marketers, merchandisers, and CRM managers aren't in sync with their personalization efforts to provide a connected customer experience, it's just as frustrating as signing on to someone else's Netflix account that has no similar interests in television as you do.

Let's center our focus back to joy for a moment. It's the job of those on your commerce-driving team to try and bring joyous experiences to your customers through their personalization efforts.

But what happens when those efforts aren't in harmony with each other or even are competing? In a perfect world, marketers are driving customers to

the site, merchandisers are pushing sales, and CRM managers are focused on customer retention. But what if customers are getting three different messages from the same brand? Or falling through the cracks because the channels are so disconnected?

Truly winning with e-commerce personalization means that your e-commerce team is connected. Connected with their KPIs, connected in doing all they can to serve customers, and connected behind one technology stack that supports personalization at scale across all necessary channels.

This is not possible without the right technology stack. If your technology stack is outdated, too manual, or too time consuming in getting key results, your commerce-driving team is constantly playing from behind in providing an optimal customer experience.

The [Bloomreach Commerce Experience Cloud](#) is the solution needed to ensure a connected customer experience can be offered to all of your customers. Our [Content](#), [Discovery](#), and [Engagement](#) platforms will allow you to fix the fractured customer journey and personalize with a unified solution that offers [full-site personalization](#) capabilities.

With Bloomreach Engagement, our Customer Data and Experience Platform (CDXP), marketers can unify all of their customer data and deliver connected customer experiences with a single solution. The CDXP creates a single customer view for marketers that helps facilitate the creation of personalized product recommendations, personalized email campaigns, and so much more.

Bloomreach Discovery offers search and merchandising, SEO, and recommendations and pathways to facilitate your customers having a personalized experience on your website. Personalize which products appear on your site and how products rank for each visitor as Bloomreach Discovery understands user preferences on a one-to-one basis and reorders products based on this and your segments. This solution allows your company to deliver personalized experiences that lead to conversion.

Bloomreach Content is a headless content management system that allows you to personalize content and products to get the best conversion rates possible. Bloomreach's powerful API retains preview, personalization, and visual editing capabilities. It can also integrate with the commerce system of your choice.

Together, those three platforms make up the Bloomreach Commerce Experience Cloud, the perfect solution needed to support your e-commerce personalization efforts and commerce-driving team.

One of the many goals you have for your personalization efforts should be to create a connected commerce experience.

Your commerce-driving team—featuring marketers, merchandisers, and CRM managers—must be committed to working together to ensure that the customer experience is not disjointed and the customer can flow seamlessly through the customer journey. Personalization will help you to "know, guide, and wow" those customers along the way.

Bloomreach offers the technology to businesses across the world to not only support personalization efforts, but to ensure that your company has the capability of offering a connected customer experience. Bloomreach powers over $300 billion in commerce annually and serves over 850 customers in a wide variety of industries with our Commerce Experience Cloud.

If your company is ready to take the next step and ensure that customers no longer slip between the cracks because of a disjointed experience with your brand, schedule a personalized demo today to see what Bloomreach can do for you.

![Bloomreach logo] **bloomreach**

About Bloomreach

Bloomreach is the world's #1 Commerce Experience Cloud, empowering brands to deliver customer journeys so personalized, they feel like magic.

It offers a suite of products that drive true personalization and digital commerce growth, including: Discovery, offering AI-driven search and merchandising; Content, offering a headless CMS; and Engagement, offering a leading CDP and marketing automation solutions. Together, these solutions combine the power of unified customer and product data with the speed and scale of AI-optimization, enabling revenue-driving digital commerce experiences that convert on any channel and every journey.

Bloomreach serves over 850 global brands including Albertsons, Bosch, Puma, FC Bayern München, and Marks & Spencer.

Albertsons   **BOSCH**   **PUMA**   FC BAYERN MÜNCHEN   **M&S**

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